



DARDEN SCHOOL  
of BUSINESS



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### **What Teachers Need from Their Leaders**

#### ***Community Challenge***

Clovis Municipal Schools District (Clovis) educated over 8,000 students and state test scores hovered around 26% proficiency in math and 30% in reading. When the Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE) turn around launched, the district sent a few principals to participate in the program. They came back to the district enthusiastic about the strategies learned to improve educational outcomes. And each principal was paired with experienced mentors who would visit their schools to help reinforce changes, risks, examine what worked and what didn't, and generally provide support and an ear to listen. The embedded coaching was a popular part of the PPE experience.

By the second round of Clovis principals attending the PPE program, they returned noting other principals' district leaders had participated. At Clovis, the district's role was to support principals to attend the program, then they were responsible for applying methods to their teachers and improving student learning. Principals started pushing the district to look at the need for common assessment and data analysis for district decisions. That wasn't something the district had in place across the board. "While the district had expectations for schools to perform better," Nigreville said, "there was no organized structure for bringing about this change."

#### ***Action Taken***

Carrie Nigreville was Director of Assessment and Accountability at Clovis. Part of her role was to spend time working with principals in the state's turnaround programs. "The idea of having leadership training at all was something foreign to us," Nigreville said. By the fourth cohort, the Priority School Bureau made district leaders' attendance mandatory which Nigreville remarked was eye-opening. "We had been expecting principals to learn what they needed to turn things around without any district support," she said. "That was a game-changer." The district took steps to close that gap and in retrospect knew more about structuring improvements that turned out to be beneficial to all administrators. Eventually, the district adopted coaching for all principals whether they had been part of the PPE or not.

#### ***Key Takeaway***

One of the most frustrating parts about professional development is having new tools and methods to address issues and no support to execute. In order for professional development to be effective, organizational leaders need to think about their commitment and the systems and processes needed for applying best practices.